



United States Air Force

ONLINE news

Rescued pilot
details evasion

Page 3

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'Sustain Hope' leads refugee relief

WASHINGTON (AFP) – With thousands of refugees crowding into enclaves on embattled Kosovo's borders, NATO has responded with Joint Task Force Sustain Hope.

Many Air Mobility Command missions have delivered or will soon deliver large quantities of food and shelter for distribution to the refugees.

As of April 5, AMC had flown a C-5 carrying 100 tons of supplies, including a loader and forklifts. Four

continued on Page 4

A C-5 Galaxy comes in for a landing at RAF Fairford, England, March 31, 1999, as aerial port personnel and loadmasters unload incoming equipment and supplies. The C-5 is bringing in personnel from Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., to support the deployment of B-1B Lancers for NATO Operation Allied Force in Kosovo.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Randy Mallard

CMSAF Benken announces retirement

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Eric W.

Benken announced his retirement April 7 after more than two and a half years in the job, and more than 29 years of service. A formal ceremony is scheduled for July 30 at Bolling Air Force Base, D.C.

"The toughest decision in my career was to recommend to (Air Force Chief of Staff) General (Michael E.) Ryan that I retire this summer," Chief Benken said. "I have worked with him for several years, to include our tenure in



CMSAF Eric Benken

U.S. Air Forces Europe, and I think we make a great team."

The chief explained there are several reasons for retiring this summer. By the time he retires, he will have been on the job for nearly three years, a stint longer than most of his predecessors.

"My original tenure was to be two years with (former Air Force Chief of Staff)

General (Ronald R.) Fogleman," Chief Benken said. "Circumstances changed, and General Ryan came on

continued on Page 4

NEWSBYTES

Send ideas via email

WASHINGTON (AFP) –

People with suggestions on how the Air Force can do business better can send their ideas to af.reform@pentagon.af.mil or visit the web site at <http://www.pa.hq.af.mil/suggestions>.

Since Jan. 29 when the address was set up, the Air Force Management Reform Office has received many inquiries and suggestions via this confidential channel. Those who want a reply about their idea should include their name and return address with each submission.

Anthrax program modified

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The Department of Defense announced a modification to its anthrax vaccination program March 31 that extends the program to include people serving on temporary duty in high-threat areas in Southwest Asia and the Korean peninsula. For details, go to http://www.af.mil/news/Apr1999/n19990401_990558.html.

Panel looks at weapons

WASHINGTON (AFP) – A Department of Defense advisory panel will assess domestic response capabilities for terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction.

The WMD Advisory Panel will be a three-year effort and report its findings, conclusions and recommendations to the president and Congress. For more information, visit the Reserve Affairs web site at <http://raweb.osd.mil>.



Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week. Send your letter to the U.S. Air Force Online News staff by completing the online form at <http://www.af.mil/newspaper/>

Due to the number of letters, not all letters can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length. Only letters accompanied by a valid name and email address will be considered. Names may be withheld from publication by request.

A rewarding Air Force career

I joined the Air Force in 1984 to be a computer operator. The recruiter said I had to pick from eight career choices.

I said to myself, "If I can't be a computer operator then I might as well pump gas." I've been in fuels (POL) for 14 years and love it. Not only did I get a chance to refuel several different types of aircraft, but I've done more with computers than I ever thought I would.

Master Sgt. Stephen J. Orlando Jr.
Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio

EAF will help but may not be the total answer

The EAF concept will probably help somewhat, but it won't fix the real problem. We have a tasking greater than that during the Cold War and insufficient resources to meet it.

A few out-of-cycle deployments will likely play havoc with predictability promised by the EAF concept.

I tire of hearing praise that is not reflected in procurement dollars and adequate resource commitment. We can't be the world's policemen and maintain combat power without money for people, planes and parts.

Master Sgt. Mark LaSalle
Shaw AFB, N.C.

Still many questions about anthrax

I find it interesting that the Air Force appointed a team to study the anthrax vaccination program. I feel there is a lot of information that DOD is either ignoring or not giving to the public.

I've read a lot of information from non-government sources that raise questions for me that have not been answered.

Harold A. Lay
Scott AFB, Ill.

Distribute the deployment burden

I have been in the Air Force 15 years. The ops tempo has significantly increased over the years and sometimes it seems hard to keep up. I have never expected the military to answer my every request.

The only thing that irritates me is the TDY situation is not always handled fairly. I have met folks who have been in as long as I have and have hardly left their home station. This is not right.

I think most folks just want a fair shake. When people see things like this, it doesn't do a whole lot for morale. I am willing to pull my share because it is my job. Others should do the same.

Staff Sgt. James Houchins
Misawa AB, Japan

Family member speaks about ops tempo

Deployments test military family bonds

by Jean Foster

If you are in the military for any amount of time, there is one thing you can be pretty certain of: deployments.

If you marry someone in the military, be assured you will spend many nights alone and have lots of responsibilities.

Now, don't misunderstand me. When we marry someone in the military, we understand what we are getting into. Just as the men (or women) we love have agreed to defend the country, we have vowed to stand by them.

There are many trying times in the life of a military spouse, such as having a job to help out with the financial situation; having your spouse deployed for four to six months at a time; and the sleepless nights of being up all night with a sick child then going to work the next morning. Military members miss many events in their children's lives, too — like first teeth, first steps, the first day of school and learning to ride a bike.

Deployments are difficult, especially for military children. The children miss their father (or mother) tucking them in at night, reading them stories and scaring the monsters out of their closets.

If you are lucky though, your spouse will be part of a good unit. Mine is a member of a security forces squadron in Air Combat Command. And the people here are always so nice about helping us out if we need anything and trying to keep us informed of what is going on with the deployment.

Deployments can be a tiring and tedious task for everybody, but keep this in mind: You'll be busy enough that the time apart will go quickly.

Editor's note: Jean Foster is a full-time mother and career woman. She and her husband calculate he's been deployed two-thirds of the time during their nine-year marriage.



Rescued F-117 pilot details evasion, inspiration

by 1st Lt. Matthew Borg
31st Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

AVIANO AIR BASE, Italy (AFPN)—During his more than six hours behind enemy lines, the U.S. F-117 pilot who ejected during a night mission over Yugoslavia March 27, waited for his rescuers with a cloth American flag under his flight suit and against his body.

Given to him by an airman as he strapped in for his mission, he secured the flag before he took off, and that's where it remained until his return, providing him a calming reassurance throughout.

"A moment like this is a prayer in object form," said the pilot, whose identity is being protected for operational security reasons. "Her giving that flag to me was saying, 'I'm giving this to you to give back to me when you get home.'"

"For me it was representative of all the people who I knew were praying," said the pilot. "It was a piece of everyone and very comforting. It helped me not let go of hope. Hope gives you strength ... it gives you endurance."

In numerous debriefings over the past week, the pilot spoke of this endurance along with his determination to survive and evade, but credits his return home to the search-and-rescue team that plucked him from deep within Serbian territory.

Punctuated by repeated statements of gratitude to his rescuers, the stealth fighter pilot detailed his emergency ejection, enemy evasion and eventual rescue.

"I knew I was fairly deep into Serbian territory," the Air Force pilot said. "I had guessed my position was within 20 miles of Belgrade — not a happy thought, considering the risk involved in a combat search and rescue that deep into Serbian territory."

The pilot said he purposely wasn't optimistic about a timely extraction,

and was prepared for potential capture.

"I knew everybody was doing everything they could, but I also knew what was involved in trying to recover me," the pilot said. "Even though that team is highly trained and extremely skilled, I knew the risks and complexity, as well as the danger. I still can't believe that I got on board that (rescue vehicle) with our guys."

The cause of the crash is still under investigation, but the pilot did provide officials with a detailed account of his ejection from the aircraft.

While he doesn't know exactly what the negative G-forces were prior to his ejection, he described them as "enormous," potentially as high as five times the force of gravity.

"I remember having to fight to get my hands to go down toward the (ejection seat) hand grips," he explained. "I always strap in very tightly, but because of the intense G-forces, I was hanging in the straps and had to stretch to reach the handles."

While he recalls the intense strain involved in getting his fingertips to the ejection handles, he said he doesn't remember making the conscious decision to eject from the aircraft.

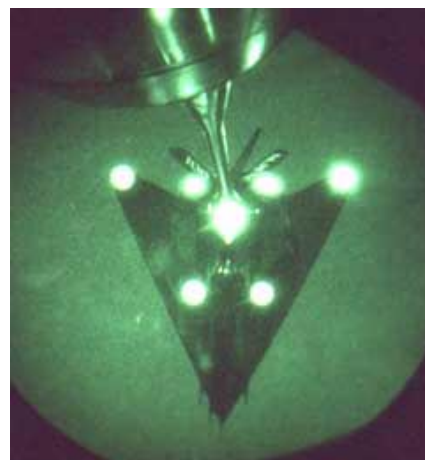
"Am I going to know when it's time to get out?" is the question on every fighter pilot's mind," he said. "The

one fragment of this whole event I can't remember is pulling the handles. God took my hands and pulled."

Uninjured except for a few minor abrasions, the Nighthawk pilot described the ejection as "violent." Although slightly disoriented after the high-air-speed ejection, he was very aware he had just bailed out deep within Serbian territory.

"It didn't panic me," he said. "I just got very busy doing what I needed to do."

After his parachute had deployed, he said he immediately started working



U.S. Air Force photo by Technical Sgt. Brad Fallin

An F-117 Nighthawk refuels from a 100th Aerial Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker based at RAF Mildenhall, U.K. in support of Operation Allied Force.

the rescue.

"I remember thinking, 'Why wait until I hit the ground? Let's go for it now,'" he explained.

The pilot attributes a great deal of his success behind enemy lines to his Air Force intense training in survival, evasion, resistance and escape, or SERE.

"There was not a whole lot of this that I actually had to ponder," he said. "The SERE training and periodic life support refresher training provide a very strong foundation of survival techniques. Having experienced (survival and evasion) at some level, even though it was in the training environment, provided some level of familiarity."

Because of the potential that the Serbs were also monitoring various radio frequencies, the pilot had to minimize his radio transmissions and calls for help.

Parachuting in, he immediately began burying the life raft and other survival equipment automatically deployed during the ejection sequence.

"There was some activity at that intersection," he said. "Thank God no one actually saw me come down." While he couldn't confirm that the cars, trucks and people he heard were looking for him, he did hear search dogs.

This article is available in its entirety online.

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CMSAF Benken announces retirement

continued from Page 1

board. If I stayed with him through his entire term, it would mean five years on the job. And that is way too long in the position for my family and especially for the force."

Chief Benken also has strong feelings about extending beyond the 30-year mark. "There are many Vietnam-era chiefs like myself who would like to stay beyond 30 years," he said. "I have asked them not to do that so we can make room for the younger troops to move up. It would be inappropriate for me to do something I have asked my fellow chiefs not to do."

The chief began his career in 1970 as an administrative specialist, known today as an information manager. He served in locations such as Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, Belgium, Germany and several bases throughout the United States. He became the 12th chief master sergeant of the Air Force in November 1996, coming into the position after serving as the USAFE senior enlisted advisor.

"Chief Benken has been a great chief

master sergeant of the Air Force,"

General Ryan said. "Knowing he was my advisor on enlisted issues has meant peace of mind for me. He tackled many tough issues in particularly tough times for our Air Force.



U.S. Air Force photo by Technical Sgt. Mark Suban

12th Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Eric Benken

"Chief Benken has served his country superbly for more than 29 years. Through it all, he has been a shining example of our core values – he has served with great integrity. He has always put his service before himself, and he has excelled in everything he's done.

"I am grateful for his wise counsel and steadfast support," General Ryan said. "On behalf of everyone in our Air Force, I thank him ... and I salute him. My wife Jane and I wish the chief, his wife Johnne and the Benken family the very best life has to offer."

General Ryan also said that the process of nominating the 13th chief master sergeant of the Air Force will begin soon.

Network pros battle Melissa; avert crisis

WASHINGTON (AFP) – Good network discipline across the Air Force averted a potential crisis when the "Melissa" virus infected computer systems March 26, according to a communications official.

The Department of Defense and the private sector had to react within a matter of hours to prevent disruption of worldwide computer networks, said Lt. Col. Dave Warner, chief of the information assurance branch at the Air Force Communications and Information Center.

The fast-spreading culprit arrived in e-mail messages with a subject line reading "Important Message ..." It caused affected computers to fire off 50 more infected messages. The volume of e-mail hampered and in some cases shut down e-mail systems worldwide. Colonel Warner cited estimates that more than 100,000 computers and hundreds of companies were infected.

"Air Force network professionals worked long and hard through the weekend [March 27-28] to battle the e-mail virus after it made its ways onto our networks," Colonel Warner said.

"Our folks had to expend thousands of man-hours ... to eradicate the virus," he said. "However, our network professionals' heroic effort prevented the virus from impacting Air Force operations in the Balkans and other hot spots."

This article is available in its entirety online.

'Sustain Hope' spearheads refugee relief

continued from Page 1

C-17s carried 152 tons, including 28 pallets of humanitarian daily rations. Three C-130s carried 37.5 tons of tactical airlift control element equipment and support people. A contract 747 carried 90 tons of rations, or about 68,000 meals.

Yet to come, a C-5 will leave Dover Air Force Base, Del., carrying 65 tons of supplies. More 747s will leave

Dover carrying 540 tons of rations. More C-5s flying from Travis AFB, Calif., will deliver 200,000 rations and 700 large tents.

Overall AMC missions for Allied Force and Sustain Hope include C-5s, 33; C-17s, 24; C-141s, 19; KC-10s, 26; and KC-135s, 131. There are about 43 KC-135 and 12 KC-10 tankers in theater.



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